



National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Connecticut Chapter
659 Tower Avenue, First Floor
Hartford, CT 06112-1269
tel +1.860.913.2550
fax +1.860.761.2466
www.ctfightsMS.org

**Insurance and Real Estate Committee
Public Hearing, March 15, 2012**

**Testimony in Support of Raised Bill No. 5486
AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
AND BREAST THERMOGRAPHY**

Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Hartley, Representative Johnson, Senator Kelly, Representative Sampson and Distinguished Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. We serve over 6,000 individuals living with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their families in Connecticut.

We are requesting that you pass HB5486, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Prescription Drugs and Breast Thermography.

We support Section 1 which will limit an insured's out-of-pocket expense for prescription drugs. This legislation provides for a mechanism to assist people with MS with accessing the medications that can slow the progression of their disease.

Health plans have increased enrollee cost-sharing amounts, instituted co-insurance and created specialty tiers. For those patients in health plans subject to these practices, the rising cost of (MS) disease modifying therapies and other medications has jeopardized access to treatments.

MS is a chronic, often disabling disease that attacks the central nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. The progress, severity, and specific symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary from one person to another.

Although there is still no cure for MS, effective strategies are available to modify the disease course, treat exacerbations (also called attacks, relapses, or flare-ups), manage symptoms and improve function. In combination, these treatments enhance the quality of life for people living with MS.

Multiple sclerosis is associated with the highest out-of-pocket expenditures among common, non-stroke neurologic illnesses. Among people with MS, the most frequently cited reason for

difficulty in access to prescription medication, MS medical care, and mental health care was cost. (Minden et al, 2007).

Among persons with MS taking one of the disease modifying drugs, those paying more than \$150 out of pocket for each prescription were 19% less persistent (a measure of adherence to therapy) than those paying less than \$20. (Express Scripts, Inc., 2006)

All of the approved MS disease modifying medications that impact the underlying cause of the disease are considered specialty drugs. Currently, there is no regulatory pathway established by the Food and Drug Administration for approval of a generic version of these biologics.

Today, we have options to help people with MS maintain independence; this legislation helps to provide access to the critical medications that can produce positive results.

We urge the Insurance and Real Estate Committee to pass HB 5846, An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Prescription Drugs and Breast Thermography.

Thank you.

References

Express Scripts. Factors predicting patient compliance with specialty drug therapy for multiple sclerosis, inflammatory conditions and hepatitis C. October 2006; 1-10.

Gleason PP, Starner CI, Gunderson BW, Schafer JA, Sarran HS. Association of prescription abandonment with cost share for high-cost specialty pharmacy medications 2009; 15:648-658.

Himmelstein DU, Thorne D, Warren E, Woolhandler S. Medical bankruptcy in the United States, 2007: A national study. American Journal of Medicine 2009; ,122:741-746.

Minden SL, Frankel D, Hadden L, Hoaglin DC. Access to health care for people with multiple sclerosis. Multiple Sclerosis 2007; 13:547-558.